

Objections to Marriage Permanence Answered

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1 My first wife was abusive and a prostitute

Well brother, if our husband or wife turns out to be a terrible sinner, we turn more deeply to Christ for our strength and our peace. We do what we can to lead that person out of that sin, and we pray for them, but we know that in some cases it takes years before a person who is immoral to leave their habits behind. We pray for God to turn their hearts, and for God's mercy on them. However, no sinful behavior severs a marriage covenant. The marriage covenant, according to the Word of God which we profess to believe, is for life. It is formed by God when we are married, and it dissolves when one partner passes away. You will not find any verses in the New Testament that teach a sin can dissolve a marriage, or that many can. Nor do we find any verses in the New Testament which teach we may remarry, for sin or any other reason. That permission simply isn't there.

It is important to address the terrible kind of situation you bring up, but it has nothing to do with ending a marriage, or with taking another spouse. These things are out of the question. In the case of very serious abuse, which can in fact be dangerous to human life, of course it is legitimate to physically separate from that behavior, by physically separating from the person. Ideally, though, even this is not permanent, but is meant only until the person repents of dangerous behavior, and then reconciliation is possible. However, nothing in the need to separate either biblically or logically requires a legal divorce, nor does it require committing adultery by taking another partner. These situations are surely trying on the soul, as are other situations, but God does not put us through more temptation than we can bear, and He promises to provide for all of our needs if we ask. He will give us what we need in those soul crushing times, and we in turn learn to rest on Him more deeply. That is the response to an abusive or immoral partner. Adultery can never be the right response.

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. 1 Corinthians 10:13

2 Jesus is love and He forgives all sin including divorce

If we were speaking merely of one past sin, surely this would be a legitimate response. I committed a sin. I recognized it and I repented. I can know that God forgives me in Christ. However, this is not the situation we deal with in divorce and remarriage at all. Primarily, that's because remarriage is not merely a past sin, but rather is an ongoing sin. One continues to go to bed night after night with a partner OTHER THAN one's actual spouse. When one is living in

sin, one cannot speak about needing forgiveness for a past sin. Rather one needs to speak of ending a present and continuing sin, and THEN seeking forgiveness.

The idea one can commit adultery day in and day out is no more reasonable than the idea one can commit sodomy day in and day out. The idea one can stay in adultery just because one has officially called it a marriage is no more reasonable than the idea one can stay in sodomy just because one calls it a marriage, as some do these days. If one is living in sin, that of adultery through remarriage or any other, one must repent of the sin, not just assume God will forgive you.

Remember, when it comes to ongoing sins of sexual immorality, the New Testament gives this a reason to excommunicate the brethren, both kick them out of the church, and have nothing to do with them. The Holy Spirit did not call the church to “forgive” those living in sin. It called the Church to warn them and cut them off from the congregation. Ongoing sin is not past sin. Darkness cannot be woven with light.

deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 1 Corinthians 5:5 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, (vs. 7)

The New Testament teaches in the clearest possible language that in the new life in Christ, we no longer live in sin. We are now dead to sin, so that we may be alive to Christ. The old life has passed away. The New Testament also teaches that our sinful ways are in the past. It even lists sodomy and adultery in the very same passage as examples of sins that we have been washed clean of. “Such were some of you” should remind us that our lives in the flesh are past tense, not present. Moreover, the Bible has the same warning for adulterers as for sodomites – you will not inherit the kingdom of heaven, the Bible says. You do not have a part in eternal life. The very same passage we quote to practicing sodomites contains the very same lesson for practicing adulterers – you won’t go to heaven.

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

These are totally different rules than a mere past sin. They refer to willful, bold continual sin that the professed Christian thinks he has a “right” to do. The only choice is to throw ourselves on God’s mercy and repent.

While I speak uniquely of remarriage as ongoing adultery, I also have to point out there are times when divorce can be an ongoing sin. For if reconciliation is possible, and one party is refusing to reconcile, this is continual sin as well, albeit not adultery. It is continual unforgiveness, a terrible sin that Christ warns us against. The Bible teaches plainly that if our brother in Christ desires forgiveness, we give him forgiveness. Christ even teaches that if we do not forgive our brother,

He will not forgive us either. Therefore, even those spouses who have been separated must be willing to reconcile, and reunite, if it is possible to do in the future. Forgiveness, including the practical restoration of the other party, is the obligation of the Christian. It is not an option.

“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

“But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Matthew 6:14-15

3 My divorce is in the past so now I'm free in Christ to move forward and remarry

If your legal separation from your spouse is in the past, you are certainly NOT free to “move on” and remarry. In 1 Corinthians 7, the Bible explicitly gives instructions for separated spouses, and it gives two options: remain single, or reconcile with your spouse. Remarriage is not among the options given. That’s because remarriage is sin. It is taking another partner while your real spouse still lives. That’s adultery.

Since the marriage bond is only ended by death, we can see the logic behind the New Testament teaching that remarriage is adultery, since that’s what God calls it when you sleep with someone other than your spouse. We can go straight to the Ten Commandments – You shall not commit adultery. This is confirmed as a sin multiple times in the New Testament as well. The only difference is that the remarried give this sin the outer sheen of respectability by calling it a marriage, and having a legal certificate for it. Yet this is nothing but an outward pretense. In God’s eyes it is sin, because He says so. Adultery called a marriage is still adultery. If you live in it, you must repent.

4 This marriage permanence talk is a new doctrine

If we knew very little about the history of the Christian faith, and only looked around at the state of many churches today, it would seem like the permanence of marriage teaching is very new, and would seem odd in any ministry. How radically different it is from other attitudes about marriage. However, that observation would reflect a very myopic view of the Church. If we actually studied Church history, we would find something quite different. In fact, we’d find almost the opposite is true: that the allowance of divorce and remarriage is grand departure from past Church teaching. It includes radically different interpretations of Scripture than the early Church had. The idea that remarriage is acceptable is the novel doctrine.

The early Christian leaders, those of the first approximately four centuries after Christ, took the Word of God at face value. They took Jesus and Paul at face value. They recognized that the New Testament taught many times in clear language that remarriage is the sin of adultery; no matter how hard of a teaching that sounded, they respected it. They recognized that Paul taught plainly that the marriage union is for life and is ended by death, that it is the death of one partner that allows for taking another spouse. That is why the abundant teaching of early Church leaders was that their flock could not remarry, and sinned if they did. Those leaders were faced with

partners who had been cheated on, and with partners who had been left, and with partners who had a terrible sinner for a spouse. Yet they stood strong with the word of God and they didn't try to come up with a loose liberal interpretation of Jesus and Paul's words. When faced with separated spouses, they taught they must remain single, and could not remarry. The early Church DID allow divorce in the very limited circumstance of ongoing adultery, yet even in this case, it was not like divorce as most understand it, as it neither ended the covenant nor allowed for remarriage. It was in practice a mere formalized separation.

That was the predominant view of the early Church. Their writings are easily available and I recommend that you look at them to learn more. It is clear these leaders understood the temptations of being single, as well as the hardships of having a sinful partner, but they stood strong with the Word of God over human emotions. They taught we may not take another husband or wife, as this is the sin of adultery.

Once you read their teachings -- and this was one of several factors that changed my mind on this doctrine years ago -- you will see how starkly different are the modern views of marriage. You will also see how loose and liberal are modern approaches to interpreting these passages compared to the early Church, which it's fair to say let Scripture speak for itself here. The modern Church has a novel, and a-historical view of marriage, and has had to use some very bad methods of interpretation to get there.

If you trust that marriage is for life -- that what God has joined together, man may not separate -- you stand with the Word of God on solid ground. You ALSO stand with 2,000 years of Church teaching, regardless of how the rest of the Church has fallen away. You stand with history, and with the early Church.

5 A believer is not bound to the unbeliever if they leave

The teaching that we can accept a divorce, if it is forced upon us by an unbeliever, is indeed taught in the New Testament, in 1 Corinthians 7:12-15. This passage begins by instructing about if a believer is married to an unbeliever, and telling us that, if the unbeliever accepts living together, you stay with them, and actually that your union will help make them holy, and it will also make the children holy. So do not depart from an unbeliever.

It then goes on to read: *But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace.* (vs.15)

Some claim that because it teaches we are not "under bondage," that we are not truly married anymore if the unbeliever departs, and then we can logically conclude we may remarry. This is wrong. Number one, the passage never once says you can remarry. Just read it again. Number two, when it teaches we are not "under bondage" to the departed unbeliever, it uses a totally different Greek word than one referring to being "bound" in marriage, a word that actually appears elsewhere in this chapter and book referring to marriage.

When he teaches we are not “under bondage,” he uses the word *Douloo*. *Douloo* in Greek refers to being under heavy servitude, such as being oppressed by an enemy or being a slave of God.

Two of many examples are:

Acts 7:6 which reads:

“But God spoke in this way: that his descendants would dwell in a foreign land, and that they would bring them into bondage and oppress them four hundred years.”

And Romans 6:22, which reads:

But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

In contrast, the Greek word for bound in marriage is *Deo*, and this word can also have to do with items being bound up together. It is NOT for heavy servitude. By saying we are not “under bondage” rather than “bound,” Paul is teaching we are not a slave to the other partner, and do not need to fulfill our responsibilities for them, or continue to struggle for the marriage. We can be at peace, as is suggested at the end of the teaching: God has called us to peace.

Also, I would warn you of how churches tend to use this alleged exception; they widen it drastically. Some use it to allow remarriage when it was actually the believer who left. Some wiggle with the definition of a believer, and allow remarriage due to this or that different doctrine. Some wiggle with the definition of “depart” and suggest that a spouse who tends to spend some time away from home has “departed,” and thus a divorce and remarriage is acceptable. So this alleged exception gets blasted wide open by most churches that use it.

Most importantly, remember, the very same chapter, and multiple books of the New Testament, teach that remarriage is adultery, and that we are only free to remarry after the death of a partner. The Word of God does not disagree with itself. It is a harmonious whole. Therefore, we should never expect it to teach something different here than elsewhere, and the end of this very same chapter teaches clearly that we are bound in marriage until death. This teaching fits in harmony with the rest, if we recognize it allows for us to accept a divorce that’s been forced on us by the unbeliever, but not to subsequently to remarry. It would be quite convenient, and appealing to the flesh, if it were the other way around, but it is not. God’s way is a sacrifice, and it puts the flesh to death. It’s not easy.

6 I'm free to remarry if there is adultery by my partner

Perhaps the most common passage that Christians use to justify changing marriage partners is Matthew 19:9, since it contains the so-called exception clause, which says “except for fornication.” People who use this passage are choosing to rely on three words in that passage,

and use them to skip out on the rest of the content of the very same passage, as well as many other clear teachings in the New Testament. They misuse this passage to justify remarriage, because they choose to look narrowly at only three words, and the not whole of the teaching. It's generally a very bad idea to rely on three debatable words, while ignoring many plain teachings, in order to build any doctrine, here or elsewhere. If we are to know what the New Testament teaches on marriage, we will need to look at the whole of the teaching. Nothing we find in Matthew 19 should contradict the rest, since Holy Scripture is the Word of God, and is entirely truthful and without error.

Within the very same chapter, we see that it is God who joins marriage, and that man may not separate marriage. (vs. 6) That is an unbreakable truth. Within the same passage we see that if anyone marries the divorced woman, he commits adultery. (vs. 9) Within the same chapter, we see the disciples respond to this teaching as a very difficult one, saying – who would want to marry? Then Jesus replies by giving another hard teaching: that those who cannot accept this difficult path in marriage should become eunuchs for the Kingdom of God, meaning celibate as a part of their faith. (vs. 11-12) This ending would seem very out of place if what Jesus gave was an exception for divorce and remarriage for what is a fairly common sin. In fact, it was one of two major Jewish views of that day that one could divorce and remarry for adultery; so again if that's all Jesus was saying, the response afterward is extremely out of place. All He did then was to give a common well-known teaching. Why did the disciples have such shock at a common teaching?

Mark 10 contains nearly the same context and nearly the same wording as Matthew 19. Jesus again teaches that Moses' permission to send away their wives was only because of the hardness of the people's heart. Then Jesus takes us back to Genesis, and gives us a marriage teaching that reflects God's original purpose: God joins us in marriage as one flesh. Man may not separate that union. When asked in private by his disciples about this teaching, Jesus again tells them that to send away your spouse, man OR wife, and then marry another is to commit adultery. He gives no exception.

Luke 16:18 leaves little room for doubt that marriage is for life, and that there is no exception for taking another spouse. Here Jesus teaches that the partner who sends away his spouse commits adultery if he remarries. Then He gives the same teaching in the other direction – the partner who is sent away commits adultery also by remarriage. Either way, taking a new partner is adultery. There is no exception mentioned here. It is a very clear teaching in unambiguous language. Two passages in the New Testament also talk about the nature of marriage, in being a lifelong union. Both Romans 7:2-3 and 1 Corinthians 7:39 state that we are bound to our marriage partner until death (so the nature of the covenant is lifelong) and after our partner dies, we are free to remarry. There is nothing ambiguous here either. The union is until death. Remarriage can occur after the death of one partner. There is no exception in either teaching.

1 Corinthians 7:10-11 specifically addresses a situation in which two spouses are separate. It gives clear instructions on how to respond to that separation. It first teaches that you are not to depart from your partner. Then if continues, that if you do leave, you must either remain single or be reconciled together. There are two options given – celibacy and reconciliation – and there is no exception at all.

These are all of the New Testament teachings which teach directly on marriage, divorce and remarriage. We find no exceptions anywhere except in the Gospel of Matthew (the situation in Matthew 5 is a little different, so we won't discuss it here) and we find many clear teachings about the lifelong nature of marriage, its being ended only in death, and the adulterous nature of taking new partners. Considering all this, we need to understand three words in Matthew 19 in a way that is harmonious with the rest. We cannot interpret it in isolation, either from these other passages throughout the NT, or from the other teachings in the very same chapter. Scripture agrees with Scripture. God does not contradict God. If we are to be faithful to our Lord, we take all of his teachings into account, NOT just three words that we think could give man a loophole.

There have been two major ways of understanding the exception clause in Matthew 19, NEITHER of which allows for taking a new spouse. Granted, there are several others, but these two are clearly most prominent, and have some history behind them. The early Church, nearly 2,000 years ago, commonly understood Matthew 19:9 to be an exception allowing for divorce for ongoing adultery, but not allowing for remarriage. This is in part because the passage never says you can remarry, and in fact immediately hammers in that remarrying the sent-away spouse is adultery. It is also because the early Christian leaders recognized the teachings throughout the New Testament which said that marriage is for life and that remarriage is sin, and they took the Bible at face value. They quote these various passages many times in defense of their position, and they clearly recognize that you cannot take another husband or wife, even if you have become separated from your partner. They recognized the difficulty of being single. They recognized the difficulty of having a horribly sinful spouse. Nevertheless, they taught that their church members had to remain single if a separation happened. They would be sinning if they took another spouse. These are the men who built the Church after the apostles, so while we know they are not inerrant as the Bible is, let's give them some credit, and understand they should be taken a little more seriously than the latest independent church, or popular evangelical. They should also remind us of how novel and odd is the teaching that we can remarry just because of adultery. Read what the early Christian fathers said on this topic. They took their walk in Christ and its sacrificial nature very seriously.

The second major explanation for the "exception clause" is one that I've seen dated back at least 400 years. That is the understanding that it is an exception for fornication, not an exception for adultery, as the actual word used is the Greek *porneia*, not the unique word for adultery, which would be *moicheia*. In fact, the word for adultery is used immediately after the exception clause, describing the act that the remarried commit. They commit adultery.

Therefore, the word itself should be understood to mean fornication before marriage, either that which was discovered during the betrothal period or which was discovered immediately after marriage. In this case, it was an exception either to separate from a formal betrothal which had not been finalized into a full marriage yet, or an exception to nullify a fraudulent wedding, if the groom had been lied to about his wife's virginity. This is described in Deuteronomy 22:13-21. If it were the latter case, then we are basically speaking of an annulment of a fraudulent wedding.

While this explanation may not have the long history of the first, in some ways it is a stronger explanation. For one, it fits the literal meaning of the word used in the exception clause better, as

the clause does not use the actual word for adultery. Second, it makes sense of why this exception appears only in Matthew's Gospel, and not anywhere else in the Gospels or Epistles, in the five other relevant passages. That is because Matthew is commonly believed to have written to a Jewish audience, and the Jewish audience would have uniquely understood this exception. Jewish tradition contained a very formal betrothal period, and Torah law familiar to Jews gave a teaching punishing a woman for lying about her virginity. Hence, the Jewish reader could immediately understand either or both intended meanings. Moreover, if you doubt that the word for fornication is distinct from adultery, you will see it used several times in the New Testament side by side with adultery, apparently as two distinct acts. These include Galatians 5:19, 1 Corinthians 6:9, and Hebrews 13:4.

You will notice that either of these explanations gives a reasonable understanding of what "except for fornication" means. They give an understanding that allows it to agree with the many Scriptures calling remarriage adultery. They do not force a bold contradiction. However, if you believe that Jesus allowed for remarriage in Matthew 19:9, you then force His teaching to boldly contradict the rest, including causing great friction in the very same chapter. If we are to understand the words of the Bible, if we are to understand God's will, we need to respect that all God's words will agree. If we think we can pit one passage against the other, we are not handling God's Word correctly. The interpretation we choose MUST agree with the rest of God's teaching. This is why we must see that God's teaching on marriage, is that of real permanence until death. It is life-long, not just by intention, but by its nature. To remarry is adultery.

7 Deuteronomy 24:3-4 says I can't go back to my first spouse

Here is another question dealing with the Mosaic Law regarding divorce and remarriage. It teaches that if a wife has been divorced from her husband and has married another man, then even if they wished, she could not return to her original husband. Even among permanence of marriage teachers, you sometimes find people who will use this teaching to say you cannot be restored to your original marriage if you have married another. You will simply have to leave the new partner and remain single. There was even one early Christian father who used this passage from the Torah and applied it to the Church that way.

However, it is very clear by Jesus' words on marriage that New Covenant teaching transcends the Old. He in fact contrasted His teaching to Moses', even saying that Moses' permission of divorce was given because of the hardness of Israel's heart. Then He gave a teaching clearly distinct from the Torah teaching. Because of this, the command in Deuteronomy 24 not to return to the original spouse does not apply to the Church.

Granted, there are those who will say that Jesus, in giving His teaching on marriage, never referred specifically to this regulation. He only referred to the one which permitted sending away in the first place. That's true. However, this regulation is directly attached to that same teaching which in fact immediately precedes it; therefore if the Mosaic basis for marriage law has changed, and we have a New Testament doctrine rooted in Genesis, in creation itself, and in the words of Christ, it is unreasonable to apply this Torah statute to New Covenant marriage. We are

joined for life with our partner, and God clearly does not permit us a second one. Therefore, you can return to your partner if you have separated.

8 In Ezra 10 God told Israel to divorce their illegal wives

It is interesting that anyone would bring up Ezra 10 as a justification of a divorce or a remarriage. That's because Ezra 10 is an example of Old Testament Israel joined into illegitimate marriages, and being commanded by the prophet to break with those illegitimate marriages. No matter how painful this must have been, Israel did just that, and they separated from their illegitimate wives. Notice, they were illegitimate.

In a New Testament perspective, illegitimate unions are ones that God calls adultery; that is, remarriages. God has commanded that man does not tear marriages asunder, and has taught that to take another husband or wife is adultery. Adultery is a sinful union, and not a legitimate marriage. Therefore, if we wanted a fair and direct comparison between Ezra 10 and the Church today, we would have to say it shows we must depart from our adulterous remarriages. That is the comparable situation. A covenant marriage is the legitimate marriage, and that is the one we must remain in.

Some people wrongly try to use Ezra 10 to specifically justify leaving a spouse who is a nonbeliever, but Ezra 10 provides zero justification for this. Number one, it is a mere example from the Old Testament, an example which happened according to very different realities and different teachings than we have today. Number two, the New Testament specifically deals with the marriage of a believer and an unbeliever, and it tells us what to do in that situation. If our spouse does not believe, we still stay with them, knowing that we can help to make them holy, and help to make the children holy. If they truly abandon us or force a divorce upon us, we can accept their action, we are permitted to cooperate with their leaving the marriage.

These are the instructions the Christian has regarding marriages with unbelievers. The Old Testament does not instruct on that for the Christian, but deals with a different reality than we have today, especially in the matter of marriage, which should be obvious by Jesus' teaching on the subject. New Testament instructions have much heavier weight than an Old Testament example. We can indeed gain some insight by examples. Yet they are not instructions for us.

9 What about Grace

What about grace? The apostle Paul asks the rhetorical question: can we say, let us sin so that grace may abound? (Romans 6:1) He immediately answers that self-serving idea by saying: absolutely not. We can no longer sin, since the old life is behind us. We are dead to sin, and alive to Christ so we live in righteousness.

You see, God's grace is not a pretext to sin more. God's grace in fact gives us the desire and the power to live in righteousness. It places that love of the good and hatred of evil on our hearts. It shows us how to leave our sin. It provides strength and wisdom to do this. The New Testament

even teaches that God will give us no temptation so heavy we cannot bear it, and that He will always provide a way out of temptation if we look.

That is the incredible supernatural power of grace. It gives us power to walk in the newness of life and leave behind the ways of death. (Ephesians 2:1) It washes us clean. (Titus 3:5) It gives us the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:16) It allows us to partake of the divine nature. (2 Peter 1:4) Yet it does not give us permission to keep on sinning. God forbid.

That is why we see the grace-filled New Testament teaching that we must repent of sin and obey God. That's why the grace-filled New Testament teaches that we must not practice immorality, drunkenness, idolatry. In fact, to claim that we have grace, yet to live continually in sin, is to play act being a Christian. It makes us a hypocrite. That is why Jesus teaches that there are those who will proclaim His name, and even do many miracles, but at the last day, this is what He will tell them – depart from me, you who practice lawlessness, I never knew you. (Matthew 7:23)

That's what Jesus will say to lawless Christians who use God's miraculous grace as a pretext for sin. I never knew you. According to Scripture the adulterer, the drunkard, the violent, the idolater and other sinners will not enter heaven. They will be thrown into hell, even if they claim to be a Christian. We are known by our fruits, brethren. To say you are Christian and that you have God's grace, but to live continually in sin, is to tell the world by your fruit that you are definitely NOT a Christian, you are a lost soul in need of Jesus Christ. Your fruit reveals who you are.

Grace brings us to Christ and makes us into a new creation. Grace prepares a path before us to grow as God's children. It does not provide a license to live in adultery. That is refuted by the Word of God. Those who think they have license to live in sin, will find out terribly when they meet Jesus, what a lie this is. Their end is in hell.

Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.

He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning.

In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.

(1 John 3:7-8,10)

10 You are condemning me

Not really. I am warning you that if you continue in sin, the Lord God will condemn you in the judgment, and you will go to a place of eternal torment. I am warning you also of the cost of sin in this life, and the horrible suffering it causes. To warn someone of great hurt, or of a terrible fiery end is an act of love, and it shows a respect for the human soul, and a desire for its good. I can condemn no one. But I must warn you of God's judgment and remind you of His Word.

For those who live in adultery, God's Word condemns you. It teaches that no adulterer will inherit the kingdom of God. It teaches that adultery is prohibited, and the only time in history that God ordered a nation's law, He commanded it be punished by death.

In the New Testament church, pastors are commanded to cut off the unrepentant sinners from the Church. Whether it be for sexual immorality, drunkenness, or idolatry, God commands that these people be removed to protect the flock from that evil becoming normal. Christians are to turn the sinner over to the torments of the devil, hoping perhaps that they may repent and be saved in the end.

The preacher is commanded to rebuke sin (2 Timothy 4:2), just as we are commanded to rebuke our sinning neighbor. (Leviticus 19:19)

Very often, when people claim you are "condemning" them, it is simply their attempt to dodge the fact they are boldly sinning, and they don't care whom it affects. They don't care if it offends God. They don't care if it offends their neighbor. They don't care if it harms children, damages the social fabric, or normalizes evil in society. They just love their sin, and they want to lash out at anyone who calls them to repentance. However, attacking the prophet who warns you will not change the greater situation, or the fact that sin in a Christian defames the name of Jesus. It will not change the warnings of the Bible that sinners will be cast into hell. It will not change the warnings that sin is punished by real death, and by the death of our children. It is just an attempt to lash out. What the sinner needs is the patience to listen, and the humility to be able to say, yes, they are breaking God's commandments, and they want to repent. That takes a soft heart, and a grace-filled person to do. It is only the prophet who warns. It is the Almighty who condemns.

11 You are a legalistic Pharisee

It is interesting that a supporter of ripping marriages apart should call anyone else a Pharisee for any reason. That is because the supporter of divorce and remarriage actually believes in the doctrine of the Pharisees, and not that of Jesus and the apostles. It was the Pharisees who believed in tearing marriages apart, and many even taught you could do so for almost any reason. Therefore, a proponent of the Pharisaical view of marriage is not in a position of accusing anyone else of being what they are, unless of course they mean it as a compliment, but somehow I don't think they do. Divorce and remarriage is the doctrine of the Pharisees.

Moreover, the term "Pharisee" has more or less become a ministry cuss word, and has very little meaning anymore. It is the church version of the f-word leveled at whatever minister or doctrine you disagree with. Most often, it is leveled at those who teach what Jesus and the apostles taught, which is that we must obey God and repent of our sins. This is the teaching of the Son of God and of His disciples, so it is odd any Christian would think to slander that as being Pharisaical.

To call those who teach what Jesus and the apostles taught Pharisees, is to call Jesus and the apostles Pharisees. Would you call Christ a Pharisee? Would you label Him as the same people who rejected and murdered Him? Jesus and the apostles held people to righteous behavior, and they warned of dire consequences, including the fires of hell, if people returned to sin. To give

you just a few reminders of just how “pharisaical” by modern standards these righteous men were, here are a few passages from the New Testament to let you know, these men do not mess around:

“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:20

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.

“Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Matthew 7:13-14

*“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:
Matthew 25:41*

“Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’

“And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’

Matthew 7:22-23

“And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire—

“where

*‘Their worm does not die,
And the fire is not quenched.’*

Matthew 9:47-48

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,

nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?

For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people."

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Hebrews 10:28-31

Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.

And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.

Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.

Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.

He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

1 John 3:4-8

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

1 John 5:2-3

“Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,

“but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.

Acts 26:19-20

Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,

that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.

1 Peter 4:1-3

“And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.

“Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.

“I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

Revelation 2:21-23

I think you can see from these biblical passages, and there are many more like them, that righteousness, obedience, and repentance were taught by Jesus and the apostles, along with warnings of punishment. Therefore, if the bar for being a “Pharisee” is to preach these things, then God and all of His children are Pharisees. But that makes no sense. Does it? Therefore, this is little more than a sad ministry cuss word leveled by people who are afraid of preaching the truth. Anyone who supports divorce and remarriage is in fact supporting the doctrine taught by the Pharisees.

12 I know what the Bible says about remarriage being adultery, but then it also says – it is not good for man to be alone – so God doesn’t want divorced people to be alone. If I want to remarry I have permission.

It's interesting; this objection seems to take us back to the beginning, as Jesus takes us back to the beginning in His teaching on marriage. However, it contradicts Jesus. It tries to take the general principle given in Genesis 2:18, the principle God states before He makes Eve for Adam – It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper comparable to him. This communicates that there is something in man's character that is fulfilled, that is bettered, by having a comparable partner, the female with him.

Yet how does the general principle of man being bettered through the partnership of marriage, permit man to commit immorality? As a general rule, I would not recommend taking general principles and trying to overrule plain instructions with them, and in this case it definitely does not work. Jesus interprets Genesis for us perfectly when it comes to marriage. He teaches that God's purpose from the beginning has been for man and woman to be together for life, and that since God's hand joins us together, man may not separate us. If a husband or wife ever takes another partner, they commit adultery. The Holy Spirit repeats this teaching multiple times through the apostle, even giving plain instructions for the separated spouse, commanding to either reconcile or remain single.

If the general principle of compatibility, as given in Genesis 2:18, could overrule plain instructions, we'd all be in big trouble. For example, could a person who likes to say- kidnap children – excuse himself by saying – but right here in the Bible its says it's not good for man to be alone? Can he justify his kidnapping if he is lonely? Likewise, could a person who is working far from his wife and has an affair say – sure God says it's wrong, but He also says right here in Genesis 2:18 that it's not good for man to be alone, so I know it's okay? Can a general principle of the compatibility of male and female be used to allow a lonely person to commit immorality? Come on, that would be absurd.

Moreover, even the beautiful completeness of male and female is not a command that every single soul should marry. That would be strange in light of the fact the New Testament treats celibacy as an acceptable option to avoid marriage in Matthew 19, and at other times is treated as an ideal, the higher calling than marriage. If Genesis 2:18 really meant it's wrong for male and female not to be together, why would celibacy be uplifted and honored so much? Genesis 2:18, then, as we can see, does not give anyone an excuse to remarry if they are lonely, or an excuse to commit other sins of the flesh due to loneliness. It is a reflection of God's plan and purpose in creation for the man, in fulfilling him through creating his helpmeet. It is not a commandment that one should never be lonely. It is not an excuse for sin. Let Jesus interpret Genesis 2 for you, brother – What God has joined together, let not man separate.

13 What about if children are involved?

You hear this objection thrown out sometimes, and it usually contains a very emotional charge. It's kind of a – how dare you take parents away from their children -- charge, but really, this

objection is not an obstacle at all. To begin with, people who believe it's okay to tear apart a covenant marriage and then marry another, have no business saying – how dare you -- to anyone, since they support ripping a marriage apart, children and all. They ought to drop the emotional outrage then.

However, this apparent obstacle, that of a remarriage which has produced children has an easily seen solution: the couple cease committing adultery, and then they still take care of the children, including doing so together when necessary. It's that simple. One does not need to be sleeping with a man or woman to take care of children. The adultery has to end, but the children are still blessings from God, are a real responsibility, and can receive care from both of their parents. Where is there a problem?

If I were to start, God forbid, going down the block and cheating on my wife with some woman, and I got the lady pregnant, would that justify continuing my affair? Could I say to myself – now it's acceptable to keep sleeping together since we have a child? Now we have to continue our affair. Of course not. There is no logical justification for continuing an affair, just because a child has resulted from it. And that is what the remarriage is – an adulterous affair. You still have to end your affair to be right with God, and there's NO necessity to continue in sin just for the children.

That's a horrible thought if you consider it. Actually, once children are involved, we should see more clearly the need to get OUT of the sin, as our behavior will be an example to them, and affect them greatly. If you care about the children, end your adultery. If you care about the future, end your adultery. If you care about the Church, end your adultery. If you care about representing Christ to the world, end your adultery.